

## STUDY OBJECTIVES (915 words)

Field of Study: Public Health

During the last eight years, I have been working and learning on the job, with responsibilities for implementation of drug use related HIV/AIDS Interventions in Vietnam. Now that I have taken up the position of Senior Program Officer with \_\_\_\_\_, an international non-governmental organization (NGO), working in the field of public health with focus on HIV/AIDS programs, I have been given increased responsibilities and offered more opportunities to demonstrate my management and leadership skills in program management and coordination. I have a strong desire to hold leadership position in HIV/AIDS-related health services programs especially in the area of bridging international aid and national needs/resource allocation. Although I have obtained a Master of Business Administration course, I feel it is necessary for me to gain a Masters Degree in Public Health to ensure that I can demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding of principles and skills fundamental to public health practices. I want to focus on Health Services Management and Policy with monitoring and evaluation as a sub-specialty since it will enable me to be more efficient in my current and future responsibilities in management of HIV/AIDS programs, that are crucial for country's development.

A focus on Health Services Management and Policy will also be supplementary to my previous two-year training on Master of Business Administration, which was conducted in Hanoi by the \_\_\_\_\_.

For a long time I have carefully studied the core competencies recommended by the Council of Linkages between Academia and Public Health Practice for efficient public health professionals. They are divided into eight domains: Analytic Assessment skills, Basic Public Health sciences skills, Cultural Competency skills, Communication skills, Community Dimensions of Practice skills, Financial Planning and Management skills, Leadership and Systems Thinking skills, Policy Development/Program Planning Skills.

Although I am aware that I have already obtained some skills including communication, cultural competency, financial planning and management, I always see the need to improve those skills to provide my services more effectively. While competencies within one domain can be cross-cutting and supplementing those within others and vice versa, I would like to elaborate overall linkages between academic learning of a number of core competencies domains and their practical application into my current and future work as below:

Since 2004, the Government of Vietnam has been receiving increasing financial and technical assistance from the U.S. government, through the U.S President's Emergency Plan on AIDS relief and from other donors for HIV/AIDS programs. Since the drug using population in Vietnam accounts for more than 60% of the total number of HIV-infected cases, special focus has always been given to programs targeting this population group. In the role of a Senior Program Officer in \_\_\_\_\_, my responsibilities have ranged from project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of health services

for drug users and their families in six provinces. In addition, I am responsible for facilitating linkages with the government programs, international organizations, local NGOs and potentially the private sectors for coordination of HIV/AIDS programs targeting drug users. In order to successfully fulfill these responsibilities, I need to develop my Leadership and Systems Thinking Skills, more specifically in identifying internal and external issues that may impact delivery of essential public health services for vulnerable groups who are at risk of HIV infection.

With the support from the U.S. Government through the Emergency Plan, \_\_\_\_\_ - supported programs are expanding rapidly both geographically and programmatically. As a result, the number of staff under my supervision is increasing. Therefore, human relations skills in the management of organizations, motivation of personnel, and conflict resolution skills play a very important role. In the meantime, while programs need to be technically effective, they need to be cost-effective to make sure that for the same level of resources, maximum number of people will get necessary health services. This is where Financial Planning and Management skills are critical.

Prior to program design and development, various sources of information need to be collected and analyzed. Therefore, I want to gain research skills to be able to address the critical issues in improving the population's public health, especially the health of HIV-related high risk and vulnerable populations. Analytical Assessment skills will be required in defining population-based public health problems and in enhancing ability to link evidence-based approaches to public health planning, implementation and evaluation.

Also, it is important that programs are appropriately designed in the legal context of Viet Nam. Therefore, the ability in identification, interpretation and implementation of public health laws, regulations and policies related to specific programs is very critical and can be gained through training in Policy Development/Program planning skills with adaptation to the local context.

After the MPH study, I wish to continue my employment with \_\_\_\_\_, managing programs focusing on HIV prevention, drug dependence rehabilitation, care and treatment services for Vietnamese drug users and other vulnerable population groups. I strongly believe that with additional knowledge and skills, I really hope to contribute my services in Vietnam's effort to make a difference regarding the HIV/AIDS epidemic: reduction of drug use in the community, more drug users being able to successfully quit drug use, reduction of new HIV infection, better access and coverage of effective treatment and care services for people living with HIV/AIDS; reduction of stigmatization and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS, their family members and children, and overall the general health of the community will be improved. And I know very clearly that my first step is to go to the U.S. for a MPH study.